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THE CHURCH'S
MESSAGE TO
MEN . . .

- THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY
THE REV. CANON GORE → → →
THE REV. MINOR CANON BLACKIE →
THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP MYLNE → →
THE VERY REV. DEAN HOLE → →
THE REV. PROFESSOR SHUTTLEWORTH



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CLINTON, ONT.

W. D. A. N.

The Church's Message
to Men.



The Church's Message to Men.

A SERIES OF SERMONS

PREACHED IN THE BOROUGH OF CHATHAM

BY

THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.

THE REV. MINOR CANON BLACKIE.

THE REV. CANON GORE.

THE RIGHT REV. BISHOP MYLNE.

THE VERY REV. DEAN HOLE.

THE REV. PROFESSOR SHUTTLEWORTH.

Edited by

JOHN TETLEY ROWE, M.A.,

Rector of Chatham.

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Preface.

THE reason for publishing these Sermons is soon told. The Borough of Chatham contains a population of over 65,000; in this total are included 7,000 dockyard men, 5,200 bluejackets and marines, and 4,000 soldiers, and at times these numbers are greatly exceeded. This vast body of men, largely young men, forms in itself an appeal to the Church to put forth her best efforts to attach them to God and His Church. It was this thought, I think, which induced the Bishop of Rochester to place himself at the head of a movement, the object of which was to arrange for a Series of Six Sermons to be preached annually at Chatham to Men only.

May I express at once, what all those who were associated with me feel, viz., that whatever amount of success was attained by this effort; was almost entirely due to the aid and cordial sympathy extended to us by the Bishop of Rochester.

The Archbishop of Canterbury preached the first Sermon in the Parish Church on Sunday, January 15th. The

Church was packed to its utmost capacity with a congregation of about 1,000 men. That Service was an inspiration in itself, and the impression made is, I think, not likely to be soon forgotten. At S. Mark's, Brompton, and at Christ Church, Luton, if the congregations were not so crowded there were few seats vacant.

That these Sermons, extending over a period of six weeks, drew together and impressed so large a body of men seems to afford sufficient warrant for sending them forth in the present form. The Church has a Message to Men, and the title of these Sermons was recognized by each preacher as conveying tersely the idea which was in the minds of all who helped in the work. The message which was delivered to us will, I venture to think, be read with interest by others, whilst I believe that many who heard the Sermons may be glad to possess them in this form.

The clergy and laymen who were associated with me are most grateful for the help that these Sermons have been to us in Chatham. I trust that they may be equally valued by those who now read them. Our warm thanks are due to the Press in these towns, and especially to Mr. Neeves and Mr. Shirley, the editor and reporter of the *Chatham News*, through whom week by week the Sermons were placed *in extenso* in the hands of many thousands.

“Donum est Dei diligere Deum.” The greatest of our preachers cannot make man love God. Man endeavoured

to do his part both in the pulpit and by warmly inviting his brother men to come to the Services. Shall we doubt that God the Holy Spirit is conferring and will yet confer by the following pages this greatest of all gifts upon both hearers and readers—to love God.

J. TETLEY ROWE.

The Rectory, Chatham,

Feast of S. Matthias', 1899.

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SERMON I.

The Church's Message to Mankind.


BY

FREDERICK TEMPLE, D.D.,

Lord Archbishop of Canterbury.

S. JOHN I. 14.

"And the Word was made Flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."

HE Lord Jesus Christ, after He had left this world and gone to sit at the right hand of the throne of His Father in Heaven, did not leave us without any means of learning what it was He had done, or any means of learning His love or His power; but He created a Church, and entrusted that Church with the duty of giving His message to the world, and the Church, ever since that time, has been charged with the delivery of that message, which can be summed up very briefly, for it is simply this. The Church calls upon the whole human race to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ; that is, to appreciate His goodness, to believe in His love, and to trust in His power; and the Church reiterates that

message in every variety of form, and will go on doing so until the Lord will come back again to take the government of those that belong to Him. That message, therefore, we have to give to all whom we can reach, and when we give that message it is quite natural and quite right for men to say, "Why? You ask us to believe in this Lord Jesus Christ, as you call Him—why should we do so?" It is a perfectly fair question to ask. A man not only has the right to ask such a question, but he is bound to do it in some shape or other. He is bound to know why he should accept this particular teaching; and the Church's reply must always be the same—"You have the answer in yourselves." The answer is always with you. If you look rightly you can find it within you. It isn't something that has to be got together with great labour and trouble. It is not the result of long-continued study. It is within your own soul. For you have within you a strange power, which shows its unearthliness by the fact of its universality—a power which is able to distinguish between right and wrong. There are other faculties, there are other powers in the mind by which you can distinguish in many cases truth from falsehood. There are other faculties by which you distinguish between what is beautiful and what is ugly; but this faculty which you possess—and you alone among all the creatures that dwell upon this earth—is the faculty of distinguishing between right and wrong. It is a power within your own souls, which is perpetually whispering to you what you ought not to do and what you ought to do, which is perpetually passing

judgment upon what you have done, and either allowing it or condemning it ; and although this power may sometimes be almost extinguished within a man by reason of its disuse, yet there are very few indeed in whom it is quite extinguished, and for the great majority of us this power lives and rules and works. Not that this faculty, which we commonly call conscience, is always correct in its judgment. It is like any other faculty of the soul. It needs education.

We are told in the New Testament how it is that it is educated. It is educated by use, just as all other faculties are educated—by use ; and those are pronounced in the New Testament to be of full strength and maturity, and to have the power of governing their own lives, and of acknowledging the doctrine which ought to rule those lives, in whom that faculty is trained by being used. Those who are so distinguished have, by reason of use, exercised their sense to discern between good and evil. The faculty is trained and educated by being used, and just as all other faculties within us cannot be trained and educated in any other way. With other faculties there is precisely the same thing. If you want to teach a man to use his understanding, for instance, you set him to the practice of it in his childhood, and all the different powers upon which the understanding is exercised are treated in the same way. You set a child to learn arithmetic. You know very well there is but one way of teaching it. Whilst you explain everything as you go along, you make him practise the arithmetical problems that you

put before him—you make him, as it is said, do sums. There is no other way of teaching him arithmetic. No amount of explanation will make him really understand it until he practises it. So, if you want to teach a man a language, you must go precisely in the same method. You must always practise him in the use of the language. He will use it very little at first, because he knows but very little, but his knowledge will increase as he uses it; and unless he uses it, your explaining it to him, and talking about it to him, will certainly not teach him.

Again, you want to teach a man to play a musical instrument. How far will you get in instructing him unless you make him practise it, and perpetually watch over his practice? So it is in the case of this faculty within us. This faculty which distinguishes between right and wrong can only be educated by perpetual use. And when it is so used, what will it do? In the first place, when it has been exercised as I have said, this faculty will enable you to appreciate. You will appreciate what is good, what is excellent; and you will feel the power and the beauty and the eternal truth of goodness. You feel it without any demonstration, simply because you have it there before you. Why does a man believe that justice is better than injustice? Why? Does justice always prevail? Can you say there is not anything unjust that is done under the sun, or can you say that experience shows that injustice invariably is punished? You cannot say it. Your experience contradicts it flatly; but nevertheless you have a voice within you

which says that, in spite of your experience, whatever may be your experience, justice is better—nay, it is stronger—than injustice ; that justice is an eternal thing, which is part of the law which rules the eternal world, and that through all time, and for ever, the just shall in the end prevail.

So, too, you feel the excellence of purity—the purity which makes a man live by that which is highest and noblest within him, which puts down all the impulses that belong to the flesh—which puts them down and keeps them under absolute control. Why should you believe that there is this excellence in purity? Why? You can't help it, if you really have your faculty properly taught. If you are trained, and you exercise the conscience within you, that conscience will inevitably tell you that purity is an eternal thing, and that it must prevail over its opposite. You believe that goodness is better than evil, better than unkindness, better than malice. Why? Is goodness always honoured here on earth? Do we invariably find that goodness asserts itself above all things around? No, indeed. Goodness very often does not prevail. You will see many things that prevail rather than goodness. You will see power prevail. A man's ability, his intellect—you will see that prevail against any amount of goodness ; and yet for all that you have the voice within saying that, in spite of all that power, goodness is better than its contrary. And throughout all time, for ever and ever, it always will be, and not only will be better, but will be stronger. That is the voice within you, and we ask you to believe in the Lord

Jesus Christ because that voice within you will tell you to do so.

So the Church's Message always carries in it the character, the life, the death, the wonderful humanity of the Lord Jesus; and when we desire to make men Christians we put before them what Christ was, and we tell them how He lived here among men, how He died, and why He died. We bid them think of Christ's life, of His wonderful holiness, of His self-sacrifice, of His utter disregard of all selfish considerations, and of His one never-wavering purpose to rescue mankind from the misery into which sin has brought them. That is the answer to the question, "Why should I believe?" Go and look at the Lord Jesus. Go and look at Him. Listen to those who can tell you what He was, and what He did. Read what is written concerning Him. Read it carefully; think of it; put it by the side of what you know about any other man that ever lived. See whether you can find His match, or anything approaching to His match. See whether His very presence in the world has not made a difference to the whole human race ever since that time. See what His teaching is like. Listen to the call which He is perpetually making to you. Listen to the call that you will be self-sacrificing, that you will be generous, that you will be true, that you will be just.

Yes, of course, you may turn a deaf ear to the call, and yet even while you turn a deaf ear to the call, your soul within you, in spite of yourself, will acknowledge that there is something in that call which you cannot simply put aside.

“Unselfish!—why should I be unselfish? Why should I sacrifice myself for other people? Why should I be the one to make myself in any degree even slightly inconvenienced for another man’s good?” Why? Because you know, and your own heart recognizes, that it is a noble thing to do—that you are yourself something more excellent when you do it. Is it not so when we look at examples of men who have sacrificed themselves for others? Is there any man living, unless indeed he has extirpated all that is good within him, who, even if he is following evil courses, yet is absolutely free from a feeling of admiration when he reads or hears of some noble self-sacrifice by some man for the lives of others? Think of the man who, at the peril of his life, rescues another from death! Think of the man who plunges into raging fires because he sees a chance of saving someone who is on the point of destruction! Think of the man who, in some desperate emergency, gives up his own life freely, because he sees by so doing that it is a glorious thing to do! Look at the traditions which prevail among men. Why is it that when out at sea there is the rule that the captain shall be the last to leave the sinking ship? It is not a rule of selfishness! It is not a rule of disregard to all considerations of what suits the captain himself. It is the rule of excellence, of nobility. He claims it as his privilege. Why should he think it a privilege? Because the voice within him—which rings amongst us from the other world—tells him that he must uphold the traditions of honour that belong to his profession. It is for this reason

that the Church is perpetually putting before all men the life and the character of the Lord Jesus Christ ; and it is rooted in this life and character that every Christian finds the strength of his conviction that the Lord is his Saviour, is his King, is the object of all his highest love.

So it is written here, "The Word was made Flesh." The Lord Jesus took upon Himself our humanity. He became a Man just as we are men. They beheld Him, and in their faces we still behold His glory, the glory as of the Father Himself. We behold His glory, full of grace and truth. That being so, let me put before you one or two questions that naturally follow.

To whom is this message sent ? The Church is perpetually preaching this. Look to the Lord Jesus. To whom does she preach it ? She preaches it to all mankind, and she knows very well for whom the message is really meant. Who are they that will accept such a message as this ? They are those whose consciences have been aroused—surely those who have it in them to appreciate a beautiful character ; surely those who have it in them to know what is real love, and who are able to recognize it when they see it. Men sometimes come to Christ at the call which is made upon them, whose lives nevertheless have not been good lives at all—men who seem sometimes as if they had not the slightest spark of goodness in them. They come to Christ, and forsake their ways ; and why ? Because they have within them the living voice which teaches them to appreciate what is good. Though their eyes have been

blinded, and they have not seen it before, yet when once they have recognized the power, the beauty of the Divine humanity, they begin to see what is there. They come to Christ because they have within them the power of sight.

Sometimes it is said, "If all these things you tell us are true, how is it that those men who have devoted themselves to the search after truth have not always come to accept the message that you tell them? How is it that you get men supreme in science, who have made great discoveries, who seem to have a kind of instinct by which they search out the secrets of nature, and you see what they have done, and the progress they are still making—how is it that these men who have this power of searching into truth are not always Christians, and some of them not only not Christians, but resolutely opposed to the Gospel?" And the answer is, because, although they have intellectual capacity of the highest order, yet there is something lacking in the spiritual power within their souls; they do not feel the attraction of a beautiful character, a great nobility, of self-sacrifice for others. There is in them much that is of the highest value short of the spiritual things, but the highest things of all they cannot yet see. Nay, sometimes it is plain that their own search after truth has been a hindrance to them, because they are looking in a wrong direction to find out what truth is of this character. For the truth which is revealed in the Person of the Lord Jesus is not like the truth of ordinary human science. The truth of science depends upon the keenness of observation of facts. It depends upon the power of

co-ordinating those facts to find out the law which governs them, but there is nothing in all this which cultivates the faculty of perceiving what is most excellent of all.

Men sometimes talk as if religious truth was a kind of branch of human science, and they say, "All other truth has to be discovered by human science, and therefore the person who is best able to appreciate this truth must be the man who is best able to appreciate scientific evidence." No ; it isn't by observation of facts, nor by finding out the law which governs facts, that the religious man lays hold of the truth of God. He finds them within his own soul. And in proportion as he lives up to those truths, and in proportion as his conscience is cultivated more and more in the truest and fullest sense, in that proportion will he recognize what can only be recognized by the faculty therein—in that proportion will he lay hold of the Lord Jesus Christ, and will feel, "Here is a Man Whom I can trust ; here is a Man Whose character fills me with admiration ; here is a Leader Whom I can follow with my own soul ; here is One Who rules over men not by virtue of any force, but by the power which moves my own being. Him will I follow. He is my Lord." And so, if ever questions disturb the Christian, and he feels, as many a man feels about some very near friend, that something is said about that dear friend, casting reflections on his character, insinuating that he is not what he professes to be, that there is something untrue about him, something unholy, some pretence about him, that man feels, "Whatever else may be true of my dear friend, that certainly

is not true. I don't ask for evidence. I know the man, and I know it isn't possible that he should be what he has been described." And so in the highest sense does a man who studies the life and character of the Lord Jesus Christ recognize that here is One Whom he can follow, disregarding everything that may be said against his following Him; here is One Who, in spite of all allurements in other directions, yet by the power of His goodness, by the divineness of His character, leads him along, and will lead him to the end of his days.

It is to men who have this power of appreciating what is excellent that the Gospel message is sent. There may be, as I said, men who have been living wrong lives, who, if there is this within them, see that they can, when once His character is fully revealed to them, appreciate that character; and it is possible for the message to lay hold of their souls, and it is possible for them to turn to the Lord with all their hearts, and with full enthusiasm and devotion give themselves up to His service. The people to whom the message is really sent by God are the people who have within them, whatever lives they have led, the power to appreciate the character of the Lord.

When the message has once reached the soul of man, how shall he lay hold of it? He can lay hold of it by one way—by living in it. There is no possibility of real light without corresponding conduct. I don't mean that the moment a man has seen the picture as it were of the Lord Jesus that henceforward he will be spotless in his life. No;

there will still cling about him much that is wrong, and it may be years, it may be many years, before he is able to cast it out. But nevertheless, as soon as a man has seen the Lord, if he really has the power of seeing what Christ is, that man's purpose is determined. Onward he will go in the path on which the Lord will lead him. If he has really seen that heavenly vision, he can never forget it. A man indeed may, even after he has seen, be so blinded by the power of temptation that he may fall away. That, no doubt, is possible always. But the man who has really given his whole soul to following the Lord, he goes on from strength to strength; he goes on seeing more and more clearly the longer he lives; he goes on finding more and more power in what the Lord has promised; he goes on, and will continue to go on, and will learn more and more what the Lord requires of him; and what is still more blessed, his eyes will become clearer and clearer year after year, until he sees the Lord with a more perfect vision than at first, until his whole soul bows down before the Saviour Who died for him, before the Saviour Who longs for him now, the Saviour Who is watching over him in Heaven, and will welcome him when he dies.

This is the Message of the Church. These are the persons to whom the message is delivered, for whom it is intended. This is the life to which the Church calls those who accept her message; and they find that they have not only the promise of the world to come, but the promise of this present life, because in the love of the Lord, and in the

assurance of the Lord's love of them, they rest in a perpetual happiness which nothing can break ; in a perpetual happiness which is undisturbed by the many troubles, and even by the many anxieties which beset our path here ; in a perpetual happiness which is in reality the only perfect happiness in this present life ; in a perpetual happiness which is a foretaste of the happiness which shall be theirs when this life has passed away.

My brethren, I deliver to you the Message of the Church. I beg of you to think of the Lord Jesus Christ ; I beg of you to read of Him, and to hold up His life before your consciences. I beg of you to give up all else for the sake of following Him ; for I know, as millions of Christians have known before now, that this is the only path of true happiness on earth, and this is the sure promise of the happiness of Heaven.

SERMON II.

In the Service of God.

BY THE REV.

E. M. BLACKIE, B.A.,

Minor Canon of Rochester Cathedral.

PSALM CIV. 23.

“Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening.”



VER since the world began each successive age in history has had its peculiar marks, its own characteristics. For example, we carry our thoughts back into the very far past, and we discover that there was once a time that was chiefly characterized by savage brutality. We turn to a particular time in the Middle Ages, and we discover a period marked by the fact that Art reigned free, and unfettered by the forces of vulgarity and mammon—a period to which we owe among other things our glorious Cathedrals. And another generation is marked by a revolutionary spirit, another by being literary or scientific.

Now one at least of the distinctive marks of the times in which we live is the fact of work. There are many faults—a great many faults—and there are many virtues that con-

tribute to the tone and temper of modern days, but none of these is half so prominent, none so widely diffused throughout our being, as the fact that man—body, soul, and spirit—is alive and at work. Yes, this is a time of activity.

We look on this side and on that, and work is the chief thing that meets our gaze. Activity is not a tiny stream that threads out an untroubled course through quiet meadows; it has long since widened from a stream into a great river, that in its turn has become an ocean, sweeping across the face of the world, catching up and carrying with it countless millions in fierce and rapid progress. Work is all around and about us.

A modern preacher * has eloquently reminded us how plainly all this may be observed as we stand, early on any morning, on the platform of a London station, and watch the trains rush in one after the other from the outlying suburbs. In quick and bewildering succession they come, and the carriage doors open, and out are poured the streams of human beings—men, women, and children. And they rush off down the steps and through the streets to take their places in the shops and offices and factories of London. It is work which is the chief feature of all this busy scene.

Or you walk a little later in the day through one of the busiest parts of the City, such as Lombard Street, and you watch the different men who hurry past you or stand in little groups, anxiously, earnestly discussing some point which for the time absorbs their whole interest. Look

* Cf. Canon Scott Holland, "God's City," page 121.

at the faces of those busy men, marked with the lines that tell of keenness, hard thinking, and far seeing. As you regard them you feel that you are in the closest touch with all the toiling and planning of modern English life. And the wonder of it all is increased when you remember that London is a huge knot made up of the ends of cords that stretch East and West, North and South, binding the greatest city in the world with the farthest limits of the earth. "Man goeth forth to his work and to his labour." Ages ago the Psalmist spoke these words, but it was ordained that in this age they should find their truest meaning.

But there is no need for me to take you to London to prove all this. For we live within the sound of the hammers and in hearing of the roar of the furnaces of one of England's greatest dockyards, towards which each morning thousands make their way. And from the other side of the banks of the Medway there rise up the tall stacks of the chimneys of our cement works, that send forth their volumes of blackening smoke. We are surrounded by officials of the nation, soldiers and sailors alike, represented, thank God, in this Church this afternoon. And all these, as well as the crowds that pass up and down our streets, join with one strong voice and declare that this district which we inhabit is no exception to the general rule, that modern man must not be idle. Great city, dockyard town, seaport town, and the busy centres of industry in the Midlands and the North—one and all alike tell the tale of action.

And I might go further and carry you with me when I

say that we all feel that man is not fulfilling his highest destiny unless in some sense he is at work. I say "in some sense" advisedly, for we have no right to take a narrow view of this question. We have no right to forget—though some do—that there are such things as brains as well as bodies, and that those who work with the former are just as necessary as those who employ the latter.

I repeat it that man is not fulfilling his highest destiny unless he is at work. Of course there are some who have the will but not the opportunity to labour. These excite our sympathy, and furnish us with a social problem as yet, alas! unsolved. But, given the opportunity, those who refuse to embrace it are a disgrace to humanity, and a blot on the face of civilized life.

Look down the long line of the great men of the past. Who are those who stand head and shoulders above their fellows, who have led the thought and formed the plans of humanity, to whom under God we owe our strides of progress? Ah! they have been those who did not let their hands hang idly at their sides; men of action and effort, who used the chances and employed the powers which God had entrusted to them.

And when we come to the greatest Life of all—the Divine Life, which is the source and centre of the Church's Message to Men—we find its earlier years spent in a workman's shop, its later years lived among men that God might be made manifest and that humanity might be lifted to the level of the Divine. It was Jesus Christ, my brothers, Who in life

and in death ever strove to do His Father's business.

But by your presence here to-day, you give me the opportunity of lifting this fact of work to a higher level. Part of the business of the Church of God is to catch up the spirit of the age in which she lives and works, and transfigure and transform it into a meaning which is heavenly.

And so I go on to say that there is such a thing as working for God. You say that that is a pulpit platitude, a preacher's commonplace which you have heard before. Very likely it is; and if we all practised it there would be no need to repeat it. As, however, none of us do practise it perfectly, it needs frequent repetition. Let me repeat it then; there is such a thing as working for God. Now when people approach this subject of work done for God, many do so in a narrow spirit. I mean that they regard Heavenly service and religious activity as almost exclusively the affair of ordained men, of those who wear the garb of religion. By taking such a view they inflict an injury both on themselves and on religion itself. Of course it requires only a moderate amount of common-sense and some experience of life to recognize that all organizations, whether their function and purpose be secular or sacred, must be worked by those whose business it is to do so, who are specially trained, selected and commissioned for that purpose. No institution would last a day had it not its duly qualified and appointed officers. But this in no way contradicts, nor should it obscure the equally important truth that every baptized Christian has a commission to be an agent of the

Most High. Every member of the Church of Jesus ought to play some part, however small, in the history of its achievements and triumphs.

Some among you will remember how George Eliot, in what is perhaps her greatest novel, has said that "the growing goodness of the world depends on unhistoric acts." And perhaps I may translate that to mean that if the world is to grow good, is to be made God-like, all people historic and unhistoric must alike contribute to this end. My brothers, we are bound then by the fact of our Christianity to go forth (in more than an earthly sense) to our work and our labour until the evening.

Now this work for God must begin in self. It is important to dwell on this for a moment. Many of us here this afternoon are, thank God, interested in the social problems and wrongs which cry out for solution and remedy. We are interested in man in the mass. We feel that it is part of our service of Christ to apply His laws to corporate life—the life of the town, the state, the nation. We believe that our service of the Master is a maimed and mutilated thing if it does not impel us to try and right some of the evils—the social evils of our time. But just because we are thus interested and concerned, it is of vital importance that we do not overlook the value of the individual. And we dare not forget that each man is responsible for himself, and bound to work out his own salvation with fear and trembling. Therefore the service of God must begin in ourselves. Many of us have constantly been told by older

men that if we would "get on," we must "make the best of ourselves." And we know that, often enough, this advice is given and taken in a sense that is neither great nor good. It is interpreted to mean, "Get all you can for yourself, honestly if possible, but at any rate get it ; and if others lose by your gain you must not be too particular, for business is business whatever unpractical parsons may say." Now it is not in this sense that I say we are bound to make the best of ourselves. But in another sense I do say it. For we all start life with natures good or bad, and it is our duty to take them and by the help of God to work them up, and refine them into characters strong, divine. Just as the men of Switzerland take the streams that dash fiercely and cruelly down the valleys of their mountains, and use them to drive the machinery by which the electric light is produced, so we must labour that our individual natures may be among the forces that move the mechanism of the Church of God on earth. Yes, we must work at and in ourselves. Is there no need for us to do this? My brothers, however much we may be unmoved by pulpit appeals, and even though we be out of touch with organized religion, in our calmer, more honest moments we know that the need is great. The instant that we strip off the veil of self-conceit and view ourselves in the light of unprejudiced honesty, then we recognize how much needs to be done. And this Divine work offers itself to us in different forms. For example, we who are what the world calls religious, who stand up from time to time and solemnly say "I believe"—

we are bound to labour unceasingly that our inconsistencies may be driven out and reality brought in to reign in their stead. And some men among us have to be at continual warfare with a fierce and bitter temper that wrecks and rends the peace of home life, and parts asunder those whom God has put together. And some must resist the cravings of intemperance, whose effects meet our eyes and sadden our souls as we walk through the streets of Chatham. And others find at once the foe of their souls, and the field of their actions in passions which, if unchecked, bring shame and damnation upon the weak and frail whom we men are meant to love and protect. But, indeed, you can work this subject out for yourselves and apply it according to your needs. Only remember that it is in ourselves that the opportunities of toil ever lie.

Let me, before I pass on, remind you that these things will never be accomplished by man's unaided efforts. And if we rob religion of the supernatural we are in a fair way to deprive ourselves of the moral. That is why we cannot afford to give up our habits—our old habits—of private prayer and public worship, for in these lie the secret of our strength and the surety of our success. "Why do you go to Church?" is a question continually asked in the workshops and barrack-rooms of our town—and the answer is, or ought to be, "Because the noblest battles are those which men begin on their knees, and the finest victories are those which are won not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts."

✓ But it is equally necessary to assert that God's work must certainly not stop in ourselves, though it ought to begin there. It is indeed a selfish religion which prompts a man to think only of his own salvation, and to work for nothing but a future reward. It never has been, and never will be, by such that the power of God is made manifest. No, the Divine work which we do must be seen and felt in the larger life of which we are parts. We must toil for Him in our capacity as members of society, of a town, of a country.

It was to make the world a better place that our Saviour was born into it. And that which He began we must, though all imperfectly, seek to carry on. The subject is too large for me to speak of now at any length ; but if you ask me how and where we are to be active in the highest service, the answer is not far to seek. All of us, for instance, can do something to improve the tone of public opinion. There are many flaws in our social and municipal life, and many unhealthy dwellings close to our own, that are as cancers which corrupt and kill the life of our town. An uplifted public opinion would strengthen the hands of those in authority and make such things impossible. The same amount of enthusiasm for public good that we expend upon football, for example, would make public progress more of a possibility and less of a dream. And, speaking generally, wherever there is sorrow to be lightened, pain to be relieved, or wherever in any Chatham workshop there is a young lad whom a kindly word or hand-shake might help to keep straight, there is God's work lying before you. And wher-

ever there are men who ask not, "Will it pay?" but "Is it right?" who are prepared to stand by their convictions and take the consequences—there are the labourers, the workmen of Christ. The fields of God lie all around us, here in Chatham, Luton, and Brompton, hard by in Rochester and Strood. They are white unto harvest. We only need the *men* to step in, cut down, and bind the sheaves into bundles.

My brothers, I have spoken simply to you of this Divine labour in its two great branches. Perhaps I cannot better sum up our thoughts this afternoon than by saying that working for God is only another name for copying the Lord Jesus Christ and bringing His Spirit into the life of every day. There are those who look upon Him as One Who centuries ago did and said wonderful things, and then passed into the unseen—the Christ of yesterday. They are right as far as they go. And there are others who regard Him as the Saviour Who by death and resurrection won for man the mystery of eternity—the Christ of forever. They too, indeed, are right. But if our religion is to be complete we must grip the fact that He is also the Christ of to-day. A Christ Whose Presence dwells in the Catholic Church, filling her with an imperishable life, pledging to her an ultimate victory. A Christ Who can inspire us in all that we think, or say, or do; in Whom we can live and move and have our being. I walked not long ago with a friend down a London street. We talked of the bewildering and awful problems of the great city, some of which were reflected upon the faces of the passers-by. We discussed the different ways out, the

many cures for the ills to which humanity is heir. And my friend finished our talk by saying, "What we want is a grand religion." Ah! true, only too true! But, thank God, this grand religion is close at hand. Perfect obedience to the Master's Will, ceaseless effort to copy and manifest Him—that is the grand religion which has never failed to supply earth's deepest needs.

There is a far-off city in the East which, years ago, was a home and centre of our holy faith. But evil days fell upon her when she was taken by the enemies of the Cross of Christ. And from the great Church within her walls they removed all marks of the worship of the Nazarene. And the mosaic figure of the Christ on the Eastern wall they covered with a coating of paint. But time passed on, and the paint slowly wore away, and the form and features of the Master once again were faintly seen. Men and brethren, by our sins we have concealed the Divine Likeness. But it is our duty to wash the paint away that He may be made manifest throughout our land, that we may move nearer to the dawning day when the whole earth shall be filled with His glory.

That is the Message of the Church to mankind. May she have the will and the power to declare it. Freed from narrowness and dissension, untrammelled by controversy and party spirit, may she march in triumph through the world, claiming fresh territory for her Master and Lord, confounding the forces of earth with the eternal power of God.

SERMON III.

All Alive and Wide Awake.


BY THE REV.

CHARLES GORE,

Canon of Westminster.

EPHESIANS V. 14.

“Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

HESE words are one of the first Christian hymns. In the original they are in a sort of metre for song, which you might render thus—“Be awakened thou that sleepest; Rise alive from out of the dead world; Christ, the light, shall shine upon thee.” It is a sort of hymn which the first Christians sang, and which shows what was in their mind. They felt alive—alive with that new life of which Christ had said, “I am come that they may have life, and have it abundantly.” They felt all alive, with a life intense through and through them, in all their faculties and in all their relationships. When they looked out on the world around them—the world which they had known before their conversion to the

Christian faith—they felt it to be a dead world, towards which they could only address that encouragement, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light.”

That, you might feel, was a very profitable sort of exhortation in those old-fashioned and sleepy days, but that it is not exactly the sort of exhortation that we want to-day ; for whatever be our faults to-day, we are all alive, and we are wide awake. It is an enlightened age. We are always saying that. So that the exhortation which the first Christians found natural is not what we should find natural to-day. In fact, it is the wide-awake world which sometimes tells the Christian Church that it appears to be sleepy.

All alive ! Think of it. There are probably a good many of you in a congregation like this who remember the days when you lived in some little country village, before you came up to the life of a town ; and the reason you came out of it, and into the town life, was because you found it was very sleepy. You remember those long dark nights, with the unlit, muddy roads, along which you might walk even miles and scarcely meet anybody ; and as you look back upon it you say, “Those were sleepy days. We were quiet down there ; but we came up into the town, and then it was all changed. We had a fund of things to do, and there was the light, and the noise, and the bustle, and the excitement, and the amusement ; so we say, Oh, yes, asleep in past days, but we are all alive now.” And as for being wide awake ! To be in business nowadays you may say that a man *must*

be wide awake. It does not do to be asleep, or he comes to the ground at once. Business demands that a man should be indeed one who has all his faculties about him, and knows how to look ahead, and calculate things from a distance, and seize the commercial opportunity to buy at the right time. Indeed, a man must be wide awake. Aye, but that is the point. Is it *all* alive or *wide* awake that we modern men are? Alive in our senses, alive with our eyes, our ears, our faculties of getting and spending. But all alive? wide awake? nay, partly alive, partly awake, and that not always in the deepest and most important part of our being.

Let us think about what this condition of being all alive and wide awake in all our faculties really means. I spoke of that sort of life which we generally mean when we speak of seeing life. I spoke of that sort of awakedness which is necessary for the purposes of business. Let me throw in something more, of which I am not going to speak this afternoon—I mean the awakened intellect. And yet that is not very common. We all know that for commercial purposes a man to-day needs to be well educated, and progressively educated. Yet even in that respect it does not appear as if in England we were so wide awake as in some other countries. Truly, our human nature is a much richer thing than we are apt to think, and we are satisfied to think ourselves awake very often when in truth there is but a very little, and that the most superficial part of our nature, which is awake at all. That intelligence of ours is

meant to love the truth for its own sake, and to rejoice in all that is true and beautiful ; yet when you read the reports of public libraries, and hear what the educationalists of our day—those who know most truly what education means—have to tell us, it is not always an encouraging report they have to give. It does not seem as if the real study of the best books of literature, of art, or poetry, or history, was generally growing amongst us, or growing at all in proportion to the reading of newspapers containing short paragraphs, with nothing of very much value in them, smartly written—and perhaps a picture. It would seem then as if—when one gets beyond what is necessary for the transaction of our business—the higher sort of intelligence were not very wide awake in England. The educationalists seem to be standing in the meeting points of the streets, and crying, “Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and wisdom shall give thee light.”

But it is not of that I am going to speak this afternoon. Let that pass. There are other faculties of our nature which we should attend to now. For think of it. A man may be awake with his senses, and faculties of pleasure and of business, and yet be very deep asleep in respect to that which I may call his heart—that capacity for love, for sacrifice, and for brotherhood, which constitutes, by the admission of all, part of what is greatest and noblest in this nature of ours. Selfishness ! to be selfish ; that is to be asleep—to be asleep in the faculty which is capable of what is noblest and (in the true sense) most enjoyable in

the world—the capacity for love, for sacrifice, for fellowship. Of course I do not know what the facts are here in this town, but in some places I know where those who have the best means of working such a calculation, have made the calculation as to the amount of money earned and the proportion of it which is brought home to men's homes, the result of that calculation is not very creditable. Such a calculation can only be approximate, but the approximate results have not been creditable. They have shown that there is a very large proportion of very selfish men—of men who bring but an altogether meagre proportion of the money they earn to the enriching of their family. I do not say the fault is all on the side of the men ; but it is better to think of the part in any fault which belongs to us. If a man is really alive to what is meant by unselfishness and to what is meant by marriage and a home, then he knows that though he may have some separate life and separate expenses, yet that separate life of his own ought not to be a large part of him. What he has, and what he earns, ought to go in by far the greater measure to his home ; because it is the happiness, and love, and mutual sacrifice of husband and wife that constitute the noblest basis out of which all else that is noble in the country and the Church can grow ; and the country in which the vast proportion of all that is made does not go to the enriching and the fellowship of the home is a country which at least in that aspect is selfish. To be selfish is to be asleep, I say, to what is noblest and richest in human life ; and however wide awake a man be in the

other faculties of his being, if he is asleep there he is but a quarter of a man.

Or, in a larger area, is there anything approaching to that mutual trust amongst us which goes to the making of noble life? I was talking some time ago to a man who is secretary of an important trade union—not in this place. He was complaining of the conditions in which in a very large place of business the men had their dinners. As we were talking about it, I asked him to estimate what he probably thought was spent on the mid-day meal; and he told me. Then I asked him whether he supposed that if he approached any caterer there could be any great difficulty—granted that there was a guarantee of about 1,000 diners more or less daily—in getting a dinner well supplied, and well put on the table, for a sum such as he named. And he said, “No.” “Do you not suppose it could be worked?” I asked. And he replied, “It could be worked so far as the plan goes, but we should be supposed to be feathering our own nest, and the only question that would be asked would be, ‘How much do you expect to make out of this job?’” You might make a similar suggestion, and get a similar answer, in most parts of the country. That means much, and it means mischief.

Take another question of common interest. You know how East London has suffered these past summers for lack of water. Now that would not be tolerated at the other end of London. Why is it endured at the East End of London? The answer is a perfectly simple one. It is because there is not enough cohesion and mutual trust in the population

to make them stand together and say that that which we pay for we are going to get. It is a lack of brotherhood, a lack of power of cordial and sympathetic co-operation.

Or once more. It is my lot to know some of those who have been leaders in the co-operative movement, and to talk to them, perhaps especially in the North; and they say there are plenty who will join co-operative societies, there are plenty who are eager enough about the dividends, but if it comes to the real aims with which that movement was started,—to produce a real co-operation in production and in distribution, a real fellowship in those who make and those who buy and those who sell,—you will not find one in a hundred who cares twopence about it. That means a great lack of the real spirit of brotherhood. It means that in days which we call wide awake days, there is only a little bit of our nature that is awake. The depth which lies in powers of unselfishness, the richness which belongs to human brotherhood, the capacity of mutual trust, that is still largely asleep. And that means that what is most important in our human nature is still asleep.

And look deeper still. What is a man if he is awake in all else, and asleep in respect of his moral conscience. Suppose the Christian religion to be true. Suppose that to be true which all believers in God, more or less, believe to be true, which humanity almost everywhere has believed to be true, which I do not suppose there are many here who would care to question. Suppose that death is not the end of us. Suppose that the real man lives through death. Sup-

pose that death does not change or end our life and central self, but simply strips bare our personality of its customary surroundings, and transplants it naked into the presence of God. Suppose therefore that the only thing that really matters about me is what my character is, because it endures. Ah, day by day acts are forming habits, and habits are forming character, and character is tending continually to fix itself and become immutable. That is a law—as fixed and necessary a law as any that rules in the world of mechanics, or of physics, or of biology—that acts form habits, and habits stereotype into character, and character becomes fixed and unchangeable gradually. That is true. And when death comes, death does not change us. It does but strip that character bare and plant it where there are no more possible distractions, where a man must find himself barely and nakedly with God. And then what happens? There is no arbitrary judgment of God. There is nothing which a man can be “let off” any more than he can be let off any portion of his knowledge or organ of his body. What a man is, that he finds himself. Now suppose he thus wake up to find the only things left are the eternal things and the presence of God, and that all through the experience and probation of his life here he has been making a character unfit for God, a character honeycombed with impurity, or worldliness. What is the result? Death must be a horrible awakening—to find that he has calculated all his life on a false basis, to find that he has gained, if it be so, the whole world, and lost the only thing that matters—

his own self; to find, like the sinners of Zion spoken of by Isaiah, that the presence of God is an awful and unendurable thing—"Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" That is, the presence of God. The soul that has rendered itself unfit for God shall wake and find out that it has made, in that which is alone essentially and vitally important, a mistake which is fundamental. Then indeed there will be the weeping and gnashing of teeth. What is the profit to a man if he shall gain the whole world, and yet have destroyed that which alone is of eternal value—his own character, his own self? God is merciful, but He works according to law. He must work according to the necessary laws of His own unchangeable righteousness. It cannot but be that sins indulged in form a sinful character, and that sinful character must be repugnant to God. What is it to be awake in all that concerns our pleasure and our business, and yet to be asleep in that which alone essentially matters—the things which concern our self, which concern our character. What is the use, literally, of everything else that we can imagine if the character is morally hollow, morally rotten, morally unfit for God, morally unable to find itself at home in the city of God? Yet we know the facts. We know the widespread dominion of sin. We speak to our doctors, who know our hospitals, who deal with diseases that come of sin, and they tell us of the awful prevalence of lust. We know the prevalence of gambling, and the ruin it does to the human character. We know of drink and dishonesty. These things are all

about us. Can we be living in an enlightened age? We have no claim to be called enlightened if we have such an extraordinarily wrong estimate of what is important and what is not. Verily; to be indifferent about sin, not to be afraid because of sin, is not to know the meaning of things. It is to be blind, it is to be asleep in all that part of our being which is most central and most important.

One step deeper—to our relation to God. Is it true that a man really has the capacity for fellowship with God? Is it true that besides his movement out to appropriate the good things of the world, and besides his movement out into fellowship with his fellow men, man also moves up towards God, and has fellowship with God? If so, it is the most important direction in which man can move. Then what is a man—what is he but a wretched parody of a man if he knows the worth of the world, and knows the fellowship of human society, and does not know the fellowship of God? It is to be asleep in that which is the most important part of his being, that which before all things is his dignity and prerogative—sonship with God. And do you say it is because we cannot believe all this that we do not care about it? It is an age of scepticism, we are told. Now and again one comes upon a man who is sincerely the victim of honest intellectual doubts, and this is quite certain, that if a man really loves light and desires to follow it, that man, wherever he stands at present, is sure eternally of the fellowship of God, because there is nothing which is alien to God except the shrinking from the light. But intellectual doubts

—honest and real intellectual doubts—do not account for a fiftieth or a hundredth part of the neglect of God. No. And it also is true, that the more men have thought in the last fifty years, the less has truly become the strength of the intellectual obstacles to belief.

I cannot stop to dwell on that now except in one respect. There is one argument which I will present to you, because it brings to bear all the strength of scientific investigation, to show us the reality of our relation to God. It is this. Man moves in three directions. He moves out towards nature to appropriate its resources. That movement has its rude beginnings in the life of the savages, and develops into all the complexity of our modern civilization. He moves out, secondly, towards his fellow men ; and that movement also has its rude beginnings in the family and tribe, and it develops into all the complexity of our modern national and international relations. But also, as you look at him broadly in history, man moves out towards God ; and as the first two movements find their satisfactions, so mankind, everywhere feeling after God, have eventually found Him—found their satisfaction in Jesus, Son of God, Son of Man, in Whom they have both perfect Godhead and perfect Manhood, and perfect relationship in that Manhood of each to the other—the realization of sonship to God, of brotherhood to man. That is so. Now what I say is this. That relationship which you see growing all over humanity from its rudest beginnings—that seeking after God, that finally finding Him or being found of Him, occupies a third part of all human

effort. And in point of fact, it could not have subsisted, could not have grown, could not have perfected itself, unless God had been a reality. That, I say, is an argument which science continually uses in its own department. Nothing can grow unless there be that in its surroundings—or environment, as it is the fashion to speak—to justify that growth and make it useful. Take the flowers called the orchids, which grow into the most extraordinary convolutions ; yet there is not a quaint shape in the growth of them which a biologist will allow you to doubt there is something in the surroundings to draw out and make useful. It could not have existed unless in its surroundings there was some reality with which it brought the living plant into connection. Again, the eye developed out of nervous contact, out of mere nerve, so we suppose. The sense of sight developed out of the sense of touch, so they tell us ; but it could not have developed unless there was a reality called light to make it useful.

As the orchid or the eye developed then, so religion developed. It developed however you may like to imagine—I do not care : but it could not develop any more than the bloom of the orchid, any more than the eye out of mere nerve tingling, unless there had been that reality in the universe of things to make it useful, to draw it out, to evoke it :—unless its object had been real. You can argue then confidently from the prevalence of religion to the reality of its object, for humanity could not have developed as it has developed in a religious direction, throughout its whole

bulk, and maintained that development, unless God had been a reality—God, over against the human soul, and man capable of sonship with God. That is the verdict of history. That is the effect of man's moral and spiritual experience ; and the experience of the saints, the experience of religious people, is as valid a part of experience as any other.

Well, I ask you what is the amount of trouble you and I are giving to religion, as compared to the pains we put into our employment, into our amusement, into our society? That is the point. Is it not that we are giving to religion perhaps an hour or so on a Sunday, and one or two of the sleepest moments of the day in saying our prayers? May be we cannot give to religion much time ; but we can give something of our best effort. For if indeed God is my Father, if I am capable of sonship to God, if I can really hold communion with God, and thus enter already into the life that is eternal—can build already relationships which, when death breaks down the prison walls of my present condition, shall constitute me already a soul emancipated and redeemed and fit for the city of God—if all this be so, then, depend upon it, this relationship to God requires that I should take trouble about it, that I should be wide awake in my spiritual faculties. Indeed, it is something worse than folly to be awake in my capacities for pleasure, for intercourse—to be awake in my capacity for getting and spending ; but to be asleep in my capacity for sacrifice and brotherhood, asleep in my consciousness of sin, asleep in my relationship

to God. This is truly not to be *all* alive, not to be *wide* awake. It is to be awake to the things that are transitory and comparatively unimportant, and in all the deeper parts of my being asleep.

S. Paul, speaking to men and women, knew their respective tendencies. He says to women in the Second Chapter of his First Epistle to Timothy that they are not to be over-much occupied about their dress, and he says to the men that they are not to neglect religion.* Human nature has not changed much, has it, in the last nineteen centuries? You might fitly address these respective admonitions to-day. Listen then! "I will therefore that *men* pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting." What is your capacity for prayer? What is your relationship to God? What is your real care about sin and about righteousness? What is your real capacity for self-sacrifice? These are the questions which you must ask yourselves if you would know whether you are alive. These are the questions which you must ask yourselves if you would know whether you are enlightened. It is these questions, still so necessary, that make a real Christian still feel as he looks out upon this so-called wide awake and enlightened world round about him, that the cry of the first Christian is still the cry which he must utter, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

* 1 Tim. ii. 8-10.

SERMON IV.


The Three Hindrances to the Knowledge of God.

BY

BISHOP MYLNE.

S. LUKE VIII. 5 8.

“A sower went out to sow his seed; and as he sowed, some fell by the wayside, and it was trodden down, and the fowls of the air devoured it. And some fell upon a rock; and as soon as it was sprung up it withered away, because it lacked moisture. And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprang up with it, and choked it. And other fell on good ground, and sprang up and bare fruit an hundredfold. And when He had said these things He cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.”

“ND this is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Him Whom Thou hast sent, even Jesus Christ.” So spake our Blessed Master on the night before His Passion, as He offered His great intercession for all who, to the end of time, should surrender their spirits to Him:—“This is life eternal, that they might know Thee, the only true God, and Him Whom Thou hast sent, even Jesus Christ.” And in the parable which I read just now He sets before us in threefold order

the hindrances to that knowledge of God which He tells us is life eternal. I say advisedly *the* hindrances ; because the longer one lives in the world, the more clearly one comes to see that the list which He gives is exhaustive ; that if we fail of the knowledge of God, it is one of three things which accounts for it, either sin, or shallowness, or pre-occupation ; and that the three kinds of soil, in the parable, where fruit is not brought forth, correspond exactly to these—sin to the wayside ground, shallowness to the soil upon the rock, pre-occupation to the soil among the thorns.

Let us look a little more closely into the parable, as spoken by Christ, and trace out its marvellous description of the three kinds of barren heart, the threefold mental conditions which are fatal to fruitfulness in God's service.

It seems to have been the way of our Master to draw the subject-matter of His parables from the scenes before His eyes when He spoke them. And we are told by travellers in Palestine that they think they have identified the very scene where the Parable of the Sower was spoken. You will remember that our Lord was in a boat, a little way out on the lake, and that the people were standing on the shore. And we are told that a spot has been found, where, if you sit a little way from the shore, you can see before your eyes the very conditions of husbandry which the words of the parable describe to us.

Right down to the edge of the lake runs a field of deep, black soil—what we call, in the East, "cotton soil"—deep and fruitful, capable, where the seed gets a chance, of

bringing forth the "hundredfold" produced by the good ground of the parable. Across the very middle of the field runs the footpath between two villages. And every year, in the spring, the whole field is turned up by the plough, and left to mellow in the sun until the sower is ready to sow. In the meantime, from village to village, the people are coming and going, and, across the new-prepared soil, the path, so recently ploughed up, gets trodden into hardness again; till by the time the seed is sown it has been rendered incapable of receiving it—no chance for what falls there but to be carried away by the birds, without ever taking root in the soil.

At another part of the field a rock slants down at an angle, until for some few yards, just where soil and rock meet each other, there is, over a surface of rock, the layer of shallow mould of which the Master speaks, where the seed sown over the rock will spring up prematurely and unhealthily. The rock, thinly covered with soil, gets heated by the rays of the sun, and that artificial heat calls up a straggling stalk, which grows for a while very rapidly, and withers without yielding fruit.

In another place the slovenly husbandry, so familiar to residents in the East, allows the prickly pear, with its great, broad, thorny leaves, to flourish in the middle of the crop. The seed which falls there may come up, but the thick, strong cactus-roots suck up all the moisture from the soil, and the broad, thick leaves cast their shadow, and it brings no grain to perfection.

Over all the rest of the field the deep, black fertile mould yields returns to an hundredfold.

Hardness, and shallowness, and pre-occupation—hardness, in the soil by the wayside ; shallowness, in the soil on the rock ; pre-occupation, in the soil with the thorns—these are the hindrances to fruitfulness, of which the parable speaks. And in this first parable, at any rate, we have not been left by the Master to put our own interpretation on His words : He has told us what they mean. The wayside—the hardened hearts into which no understanding can enter, of what His teachings mean, but there is simple inability to understand them, and they are inevitably “ caught away ” by the evil one. The rock—the shallow heart where it seems for a little while as though they were rapidly springing up, but where there is no endurance, no moral stamina for resistance till the effects be matured in the life. The thorns—the pre-occupied heart, where the cares and pleasures of this life are allowed to choke His word, and it brings no fruit to perfection.

Let us begin this afternoon with the honest and good heart, which brings forth fruit with patience. Would that I were more worthy to describe it ! Would that all that I have to say to you on the subject were the outcome of a heart and life more in sympathy with what I wish to pourtray. But at least let me do my best.

There are people whom we speak of as “ believers.” They have known, it may be, what it is to have strained the gaze of the soul, as it turns towards the mysteries of God, till

that they have learnt that the effulgence of His glory is all one with that "thick darkness" in which we are told that He dwells. They have learnt that to understand the Divinity you must be yourself divine. They have realised the incapacity of the creature to fathom the depths of the Creator—that the Infinite can never be contained in the shallow vessel of the finite. And so they have brought themselves to this—that they simply say, "I believe"; which means, "I am incapable of knowing, but I submit myself to the acceptance of Revelation"; which means, "in the nescience of my humanity I acknowledge the glory of the Divinity : comprehend Him I never shall, but without comprehending, I believe."

Again, we call such men believers, because, to adopt the distinction so constantly drawn by S. John, it is not alone that they "*believe* God," it is that they "*believe on* God"; that with them the very act of submission means a casting of themselves upon His Bosom ; that they rely, with an absolute trust, upon Him and upon what He has done for them ; that the Saviour, by what He has become to them, is their Wisdom, their Righteousness, their Sanctification, their Redemption. We speak of them, then, as "believers"—and you know the calm, even tenour with which a man pursues his way when once his entire reliance has thus been cast upon the Christ Who gave Himself for him to the death.

Or we call them "converted men"—men by whom the one gift of themselves which was made in their name at the font has either been steadfastly maintained, or at least has

been confirmed in very deed by the allegiance of their later life. Converted men—men turned right round, for such is the meaning of the word ; men whose backs are turned to the world, and their faces set straight to their God ; who can say with all their heart, “ I have set God always before me,” in the sense that they look upon all things, upon all that the world can offer, and upon everything that their fellows esteem, with God Himself as its background ; that they never can look at anything apart from Him and His claims ; that He is not to them a mysterious Something, lying out of the circle of the practical, but One Who enters at all times into the sphere of their everyday existence, Who looms large upon their spiritual outlook, Who is seen by their illuminated gaze with a nearness, an absolute reality which characterises nothing else of all that their eye can take in ; that it is impossible to them to think upon anything apart from its relation to His glory ; that they ask about everything that attracts them—will it bring me nearer to Him ? that any sacrifice they can be called upon to make will at least have this as its compensation, that He is their inalienable possession, the one Treasure which can never be taken from them.

Or we speak of them, again, as “ saved men,” because they have been rescued by His grace from the power of sin and self ; because none of their three great enemies can pluck them from their Father’s Hand—neither their unseen enemy, the devil, nor the visible wickedness of the world, nor the wickedness within them, the flesh—but they are

masters of themselves in Christ ; because they have been delivered from that, from which it might seem at first sight that we could never be delivered by any means, the corrupted, inevitable self which we all bear about with us everywhere ; that even the power of this has been neutralised by the Spirit of God, because He has imparted a new self, and the power of this other self has been asserted, till the man can humbly say, I am saved—to Him be the praise—saved from the evil one, saved from the world, saved, above all, from myself.

But whatever be the name that we employ—the believer, the converted man, the saved man—at least we all know the type ; the man who does not vary as we watch him day by day, because he does not live his life along the errant path of inclination, but has his face set ever forwards along the way in which he has been placed ; because Christ is to him the Way, and he walks day by day in Jesus. The deeper life within him finds its daily outward expression in a steadfast self-control which brings every action of his life into captivity to the obedience of Christ.

Such is the good ground of the parable, the honest and good heart of which the Saviour speaks, in which fruit is brought forth manifold. “The honest and good heart”—yes, we must not shrink from the words, for the Saviour made use of them Himself. The man would disclaim their application ; would say, “Nay, ‘not I, but Christ liveth in me.’” He would be the first to take out of your mouth any words of commendation which you spoke of him, and to say,

“Glorify Christ for it all, if you discover aught in me which is according to the Will of God.” But the Saviour has called it Himself, the “honest and good heart.”

And now for the three conditions which hinder men from spiritual fruitfulness. For those who bear no fruit are divided into just the three classes of which the Saviour spoke—the hardened, the shallow, the pre-occupied.

And, first, of the hardened heart. When such an one understands the saved man, and what his life is like, he says, frankly and without hesitation, “I have no wish to be like that; it is not what I care to be; give me enjoyment, and I am satisfied.” There are not many, perhaps, who will say it in so many words, but such is the general attitude of every hardened heart.

Now how did any heart pass into the lamentable condition in which this were its honest answer if you ask why it is not converted? Just ask how the footpath of the parable got into its sterile condition. How did the path become a path after once the field had been ploughed? Perhaps the first steps that dented it were the tiny, uncertain footprints left by some little child. And one by one you might see them, each separately dented on the soil—no path, no approach to a path, but just a tiny print here and there. But visit the field again after a few more days have passed, and there are larger footprints there, and now they run into one another: there begins to be the semblance of a path; there is little of soft ground left into which the seed could sink. Go a fortnight or three weeks later, and no single

footprints are to be seen ; the whole is trodden hard again, and your foot leaves no traces upon it. See how Christ "knew what was in man," when He said that the hardened heart, from which the evil one catches away the seed, was like the footpath across the field—no need of a roller to make it, no need of conscious design to render it hard and unyielding, but step by step it grew hard, and no one quite knew how. If ever we have known at any time—God grant that we none of us know now—what it was to have a hardened conscience, holding out against the grace of God, it was just in this way that it came about. Did we glory in our first deadly sin ? Did we boast of our first shameful act ? Did we think the success of our first lie something altogether to be rejoiced in ? Did we forget, and think nothing of the act that first filled the life with shame ? The prints of these were there, obvious to be seen, one by one ; as yet no hardness had supervened. But how fast the prints ran into one another ! How little time it took before there came a semblance of a footpath ! How clearly we can see, on looking back, how a state of things supervened which was absolutely different in kind from that first tenderness of conscience which made us feel hot when we were alone if we remembered some shameful sin ! And when once that hardness was established, there was no chance for the Word of God. Its very echoes died away out of the heart. Evil, in a sense, became our good. And when this pitch of hardness has been reached, what becomes of that knowledge of God which our Lord says is life eternal ?

Think, next, of the shallow heart. We clergy know well what it means. Every priest who does his duty has encountered people sometimes, in the early days of his ministry, over whom he was inclined to rejoice as having accepted God's call, having yielded at the very first summons. The gates seemed thrown open to God's Spirit. The Gospel had made, as it seemed, a conquest over their hearts as easy as we thought it complete. And then we watched for the results. And we saw the advances of carelessness, as it gained upon their seeming resolution; how the first indifference to what was good supervened over their shallow enthusiasm; how they were ready to be laughed out of their principles; how an errant, unsteadfast course took the place of that heavenward progress which promised at first to be so straight. What was the meaning of it all? Simple shallowness; the not having counted the cost before the undertaking was begun; the unfinished tower of the parable, whose cost was not counted beforehand. The man had looked on the life of the converted, and instead of saying to himself, as the hardened heart will say, "I do not wish to be like that," he had said with easy carelessness, "I do not mind if I turn like that myself." He had entered on the spiritual combat as though one or two rousing hymns, or the sound of an inspiring sermon, or a little external observance, or a few pat Gospel phrases, were all the outfit that he needed for setting out for the Kingdom of Heaven; as if these would be accepted by God in the place of an uncompromising self-surrender, of a genuine acceptance

of the Saviour. No conception of the weakness of self, no reckoning with the strength of his enemies ; and therefore no throwing of himself in humble, abashed submission at the feet of His Saviour Christ, to be raised and comforted and helped ; no humble invitation to the Spirit to come in and dwell in his heart, and make Christ to be his all in all ; no imploring of God to do for him what he never could do for himself. But simply a shallow conception that when once his mind was made up all else would come of itself ; that, the turn towards Heaven once taken, the rest of the upward path would all be easy travelling ; that what had seemed so attractive to begin with would hold him, by its own pure winningness, without any hardships or struggles. Then came—dare one say ?—some persecution. One hardly dare speak of it as such. And yet it may be perhaps that in this more sensitive age a sneering paragraph in a newspaper, or a chilling look in society, may have as much power to wound as stones or clubs would have had in times when nerves were more robust ; that the sight of some little group, contracting itself as we draw near, instead of expanding itself to receive us, may scare and daunt our hearts as much as open violence. But be it the scorn of the world, or be it the subtlety of the evil one, or be it the fierce self-assertion of some old temptation of the flesh, the effect is the same in any case. There has been no depth to begin with, no adequate grasp of the truth, no sense of personal sinfulness, no humbling recognition of incapacity, and therefore no prayerful longing to be helped and guided from

above. And so the rapid springing of the seed and its equally rapid withering have both been just of a piece. The very shallowness which accounts for the withering was what accounted also for the growth ; as the rock heated through by the sun was what accounted for the springing of the seed, and the same underlying rock caused the withering, when the roots came to touch it.

“I do not want to be like the saved man”—“I do not mind if I turn like the saved man”—such the thought of those by the wayside and of those in the rocky ground. “I have no time to be like the saved man”—such the utterance of those among the thorns. “I am too busy to be always at my Bible—my occupations keep me off my knees. They are innocent, not to say praiseworthy : it is duty with which I am occupied : or at any rate so far as it is pleasure, it is perfectly innocent pleasure. One way and the other, my day is always full : I have no place for that other world of which the preachers talk”—so speaks the pre-occupied heart, which receives the seed among the thorns. And if we speak of the worthlessness of the world, if we say that not even things harmless, not even the externals of duty are to take the place of God, we are challenged with a question such as this :—“Do you mean that these employments of mine are sinful or in any way harmful ? Do you mean that I must have no pleasures, that my family must dispense with my care, that my employers must be robbed of my time, while I devote all my energies to the task of saving my soul ? These laudable objects employ me. Let the next world take

its chance." And what must the answer be? That our Saviour called them "*thorns*"—not poisonous weeds, be it observed, but thorns—the material for a fence—which had been the protection of the crop had they been grown round the outskirts of the field; which only deserved to be called weeds because they occupied its central space. He described, in a word, pre-occupation—nothing sinful, nothing unworthy, were it only kept in its place; but that which were the safeguard of the soul, when the enemy would find it empty, and come in to occupy it himself; and which only displays itself as evil when it competes with God Himself for the first, chief place in our affections.

Sin, shallowness, pre-occupation—you will find, if you look at them closely, that they form an exhaustive description of the hindrances to fruitfulness in the Gospel, of the things which interfere with the seed. How, then, may the hindrances be removed?

In two cases the answer is easy. We can see in the case of the hard heart, how the ploughshare of contrition may pass through; how God can turn up the indurated soil; how He can cause it to be watered with tears, till fruit can be produced even there. And again, with the thorny ground—just ask what we mean by a weed. It is anything that grows in the wrong place. An ear of wheat is a weed in a rosary, and a rose is a weed in a corn-field. And so with the spiritual weed: make it grow where it ought to be found, and it is no longer to be treated as a weed. Turn the thorns from out of the field, and grow them

around it instead, and the very occupations which were hurtful, when they came between God and the soul, will be seen to be blameless and praiseworthy as soon as they are done for Him. What Christ has to say to the pre-occupied is not that they must change their employments, but that, doing the very same things, they must do them for Him, and in His Name, and must give the chief place in their hearts to "the Kingdom of God and His righteousness."

By far the least hopeful case seems to be that of the shallow ground. If it be quantity that is wanting, not quality, from whence is the deficiency to be met? The answer to this has been given in a few inimitable words—"It must be by the *débris* of weeds": by plucking up the shallow growths which flourish abundantly in such hearts; by burning the weeds of self-conceit; by using the frequent failures as material for acquiring humility. This deepens the shallow soil. And if once the man be persuaded that all that he is capable of, himself, nay, all that he is in himself, is but one great, lifelong failure, then even in the shallow heart the seed may yet spring up, and fruit may be borne with patience. For with the recognition of helplessness will come the cry for help, and with the crushing consciousness of weakness will come the might of the Holy Ghost.

Are there hardened hearts among ourselves? Then God grant that the ploughshare of penitence may be speedily and effectively driven through them. Are there shallow hearts among my hearers? Then may He bring home to their

conceit the realisation of their unworthiness and their helplessness! Are there hearts pre-occupied with the world? Then may He so deal with the thorns that henceforth the very cares of life, and even its harmless enjoyments may become the protection of the heart, to exclude all other occupation from the seed-plot which He claims for His Word!

Then perhaps from even these poor words there may come to some among us that knowledge which is life eternal—that we may “know Thee, the only true God, and Him Whom Thou hast sent, even Jesus Christ.”

SERMON V.

The Consecration of Work.

BY

S. REYNOLDS HOLE,

Dean of Rochester.

2 TIMOTHY II. 15.

“A workman that needeth not to be ashamed.”



OUR holy religion, like the good God Who gave it to us—our Christianity—is no respecter of persons. It is for all sorts and conditions of men. It is for all times and all climes. So that in every nation, he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him. Christianity ordains authority. The “powers that be” are ordained of God. And it commands obedience—“Submit yourselves to every ordinance of the Lord for the Lord’s sake.” “Obey them that have the rule over you.” But it does not tell you to try to get power merely for the sake of power ; because authority has such fearful responsibilities, and because the abuse of it is so disastrous. And so, when the disciples came to our blessed Lord, and asked Him—for they were men of like

passions with ourselves—when they came and wanted to know who should be greatest, He said to them, “The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them, are called benefactors, but it shall not be so among you ; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister ; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant ; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” So again, on a very similar occasion, when the disciples asked Him who should be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven, to their complete astonishment He took a little child and put him before them, and said, “Except a man shall humble himself, and become as a little child, he shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.”

And I remember an instance—very strange, but true—of a man who thought he was a very clever theologian, and he was a self-righteous Christian. He took for many years a great lead in the newspapers and on the platform as a religious speaker ; and one night this man had a dream, and he told it to the clergyman who told it to me. He said : “I dreamt that my soul had passed into the next world, and I dreamt that I came to the great golden city, the New Jerusalem, and I went round until I found an entrance, but it was much too low and much too narrow for me to go in ; and as I was waiting in my grief and utter disappointment, a neighbour of mine, an old man, who was known to be a very earnest Christian, but had never said much about it, came towards me, and as he came towards me he grew less and less

till he became like a little child, and went in at the narrow door. Then," he said, "I awoke, and I knew what God meant me to learn, and I learnt it. At least, I hope, through my Redeemer Jesus, that when I die—and I am near to death—I shall go in through the narrow door."

Well, it is the same with money as it is with power. God encourages men to make money. Jesus Christ compared Himself to one who praised those who had gained by trading ; but remember that those men who were praised for gain didn't think that they had got it by their own remarkable cleverness. They didn't stand before God and say, "I am a self-made man. I had nothing. I have done it all. It is my hand only that has got all this gold." What they said was, "*Thy* pound hath gained five pounds. You gave me the means, and I have tried to make the best of them." It is not riches, but the use or abuse of riches. God warns us again and again, if riches increase, set not your heart upon them. Don't make haste to be rich. Well, you see what comes of it. Here's a man said to be worth millions of money, building palaces : he goes to the end of the steamer, and throws himself, broken-hearted and demented, into the sea. And here's another man, organizing companies all over England, for hundreds and thousands of pounds : here he is in the Bankruptcy Court. No ; it is the use of riches which God commands. It is when men bring their offerings, like the wise men brought theirs at the Epiphany, and lay them at Jesus' feet.

Who are the great men in the city from which I have just

come? Who built the big hospital of S. Bartholomew? Gundulph, the Christian. Who built those cheerful cottages for the broken-down and aged? Watts, the Christian. There was a man in Yorkshire who gave a beautiful park to the town by which he dwelt; and when it was opened, what he said was this: "I attribute my prosperity in this place, I attribute the great sums of money which I have made, I attribute my power to offer you these beautiful grounds to-day to one thing, and it is this, that when we came into the big mill yonder, through those gates, my mother said, 'If the Lord blesses us in this place, the poor shall taste of it.'" It isn't that men will be judged for being rich. It isn't that men will be judged for being poor. Dives was in torments, not because he was rich, but because he was hard-hearted, and gave nothing away. Lazarus went to the place of rest and felicity, not because he was a beggar, not because he was so very poor, but because he bore his poverty with patience and resignation.

But now, to bring this subject nearer home to us. Christianity is designed for the greatest happiness of the greatest number; and because the greatest number of mankind are not in authority, because the greatest number of mankind are not rich men, because they have to work for their bread, and because they have no time to think deeply, or to study and make themselves scholars, our loving Father in Heaven has made this blessed religion of His so plain and so clear that "he who runs may read." People come to us clergymen and say, "I can't understand your religion: I

am no scholar." My brothers, I never met a man yet who didn't know the difference between wrong and right, between false and true. God has made it clear to the conscience as well as by His revelation. He has done more than this. For those who have to work hard, for those who seem to have the least of this world's pleasures and possessions, He has given the most divine encouragements. Christianity hath elevated, exalted, consecrated work. It is, if I may say so, signally and especially the religion of working men. In the very first commencement, to whom was the announcement made of the grandest news that the world ever listened to? To whom did the angels sing, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will towards men"? To whom was it told, "This day is born unto you, in the city of Bethlehem, a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord"? Did they bring the news to the palace? Did they bring the news to the college? Did they bring the news to the great and mighty men of the world? No; they brought the news to working men—men on duty, farm labourers, shepherds watching their sheep by night—

"To Bethlehem straight the enlightened shepherds ran,
To see the wonder God had wrought for man,
And found, with Joseph, and the Blessed Maid,
Her Son, the Saviour, in a manger laid."

There was no room for them in the inn. They had no money to spend in luxuries. And when, after thirty years of toil, Jesus came forth to His ministry, what did they say?

“Isn’t this the Carpenter? Haven’t those hands—which if they touch the sightless eye bring back light again; which bring hearing to the deaf; which make the dead to rise—haven’t we seen them handling the saw and the chisel and the plane?” And didn’t Jesus say, “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work”? God in Heaven works. Some will tell you the world is like a machine, wound up, and to go for ever. Far more truly did Augustine say, “If God for one moment were to take His hand from creation, all would collapse into chaos.”

And when our blessed Lord would convert the world, whom did He send to preach? Did He ask for very learned men? Did He ask for very popular men? Did He ask for men of great influence? No; He sent out common working-men, as they were called, unlearned and ignorant men. There was only one of them who had, I suppose, what we call a first-class education, and that was Paul. And what did he do? Why, when he had preached in the synagogue of Corinth, he went back to Aquila and Priscilla and set himself to stitch at the great thick leather of which they made their tents. So you see this Christianity of ours has consecrated and ennobled work. It abolished slavery, but it ennobled service. It didn’t take away God’s immutable law, “In the sweat of thy face thou shalt eat bread.” That remains, and will remain, until this world has ceased. It is the universal law, and every man knows it for himself. Every man knows that he never did anything, never could do anything that it pleases him to think of now, without

sweat of brow or of brain, without sweat of face, sweat of hand, or without deep, patient, intellectual labour.

The difference that Christianity made was this. The Greeks and the Romans, the most highly-civilized nations of the world, looked upon their servants—their slaves, as they called them—as another race. Why, they laughed at Cicero, as the tears came into his eyes because the man who had served him all his life was dead. They didn't laugh so merrily when Diogenes, the cynic, said he had been to the charnel-house, looking at the bones, and he could see no difference between the master and the slave. And so it was when a poor fellow got into trouble with his master, as we read in that short but deeply interesting Epistle which Paul wrote to Philemon. He had wronged his master, run away, and went to Rome, and was lounging about, just as a man might have gone to London to hide himself. He saw a crowd, and a man was preaching, and he went and listened; and that preacher had such an effect upon him that he went to him and told him all, for the preacher was Paul the Apostle. And Paul wrote a letter to his master, and said, "You will take him back. I will be a warranty for him. It is a true conversion. He is a real penitent. And, more than this, you must treat him not only as a servant, but as a brother beloved." And this is one of the grandest features of true Christianity—the recognition between master and servant, and servant and master, of their mutual duty.

We hear a great deal in these days about fraternity and

equality. I have found nothing which teaches it to me but Christianity. I have seen much pretence of fraternity and equality. I have seen members of societies in which there was no real fraternity, mere selfishness. But when your heart is with God and Christ, when you realize that every brother, no matter where he be, or who he be, is as dear to God as yourself, and when you recognize, in your own temptations and in your own weakness, what must be his trials and infirmities, then you know what brotherhood is; then you know what unity means; then you know when you grasp another man's hand that you are grasping the hand of one as good as yourself, and whose welfare on earth is as tenderly regarded in Heaven as your own.

“Deal gently with thy brother,
Thou yet may win him back,
By kindly look and gentle word,
From misery's thorny track.
Deal gently, for thou oft hast sinned,
And yet may sinful be;
Deal gently with thy brother,
As God has dealt with thee!”

Now, sometimes it is said to us clergymen, “What shall I get by being a Christian?” We needn't hesitate for one moment to answer: “You will get everything that is worth having, and you will get the only happiness that you can keep.” “Ah!” said one man, “Shall I get more wages?” “Yes,” I said, “you will get more wages; for, mind you,

Paul's promise, the promise of godliness, is not only for the time that is now, but for the time to come—for this world as well as the next." We can speak boldly who have lived our lives and gone through every vicissitude—riches and poverty, have associated with all kinds of men, in many lands—we can speak boldly when we come and tell you that religion, that Christianity, is the only thing that can make men happy and prosperous in this world, as well as in the next. How about wages? Why, they will get the best wages, the honest men, the industrious men; and is there any philosophy or any religion that teaches honesty and industry more than the religion of Christ? Who will get the lesser wage? The men of whom you have some doubt as to their probity; the men who are idle; the men who have constantly to be looked after. That was why the multitudes—the men who had to do manual work—listened so eagerly to Jesus. Because He was a working man. The bees like the hum of the hive, and masters like those who are diligent, exact, and true, and can be trusted in their work.

"What shall I get by being a Christian?" Well, you will get one thing. There is the happiest thing you can have on earth. You will get a happy home; and if a man doesn't find happiness in his home, mark me! he'll never find it anywhere else. He may have some flashes, some little excitements and splendours away, but if he is not happy in the home from which he comes, he'll never know that happiness which was in Eden, which is in Paradise, and

will be for ever in Heaven. Ah! there is no song in our language so dear to us as that dear old ballad of "Home, sweet home." And why is it so dear to us? Because it brings to us the days when we were happiest. And why were we happiest? Because, my brothers, we were innocent; because we didn't know sin; because we had not begun to deceive and to be deceived.

"What shall I get by being a Christian?" You will get self-respect, and that's one of the happiest feelings that can be in a man's heart. You will get this thought: I have ceased to degrade myself; I am not lowering myself below the level in which God placed me; I am a man, I am worthy of my manhood; I don't go and make a brute beast of myself—nay, worse than a brute beast—by sin and crime; I don't commit fornication and whoredom; I don't seduce a young girl, or commit adultery with a neighbour's wife; I fear God and love Christ too much to do it; I don't disfigure myself with drunkenness. Why, I remember a man who was found outside a public-house lying on the ground. He had been fighting, and he was covered with blood and dirt; and those who found him put a mirror before him, so that when he woke he saw his face in the looking-glass. From that moment that man ceased to be a drunkard. You will respect yourselves, and others will respect you. I don't believe the working men know what great honour and respect is felt for them by men who, like myself, have lived amongst them, and read God's Book, and know what God thinks of work. I know this, that I never

meet the men coming away from the dockyards, or coming away from any work, but I feel that I could raise my hat to them as they go on day by day, knowing if they are doing this with the sense of duty to God and man, there is no more honourable work on earth than theirs. Why, even Napoleon said, when one of his attendants put a poor old woman aside who was carrying a bundle of wood close by him, "Don't interfere with her ; or, at all events, honour the burden."

There is something greater than this. "What shall I get by being a Christian?" You will get a Friend in Heaven ; you will have God's Son for your Friend. Your earthly friendships will fail you and disappoint you. There's many a man will drink with you and laugh with you—though "even in laughter the heart is sorrowful, and the end of that mirth is heaviness"—who will forsake you when you have no money, or when you are getting old or feeble ; but the brother who will stick to you on earth is the Christian who will come to you when you are ill—if he is a true Christian—and he will be "a brother born for adversity," and a friend that loveth at all times. If you can find this now and again in a brother working man on earth—and you may find it—how much more will you find it in our Brother—for He allows us to call Him our Brother—Jesus Christ, in Heaven ? He has said, "I will never leave you, or forsake you." Earthly friends may fail and falter, but Jesus never. An old man said to me, an hour before his death, "I always knew, sir, that my Lord would be

with me most when I wanted Him most. And so it is.

Surely this is our great consolation—and this is the message which I would deliver to you as “The Church’s Message to Men”—the honour that is due to your work; the dignity of work; the happiness of work. Have you not found it as I have found it? When you turned away in earlier life from idleness to work, you didn’t like the first task, and you said, “I can’t do it,” or, “I won’t do it”; and a little voice said, “You ought to do it; try to do it; you must do it.” And you try, and it becomes a habit, and then it becomes a happiness, and then it becomes an honour. Why, there is no grander title in this world than that of a working man, and there is no work in this world more beautiful than that of a working man. It was right that the Princess should come down from London to launch the “Irresistible”; and we are proud that those in authority can tell the nations that threaten us and interfere with us, “Beware! We will not be insulted. We’ve got the grandest fleet in the world, and we’ll defend the right.” But who made the “Irresistible”? Who did the hard work? Who brought the iron and the coal out of the earth; hewed the wood and hammered the nails? Why, the working men. It is, as the Lesson just read has told us, we are all united, the head and the hand, and we must be as one: one brotherhood, and that in Christ; God’s sons, Christ’s brothers, the scholars of the Holy Ghost. All one, all equal, as we are here to-day. And it is, as I have often thought and said, the happiest sight you can see on earth—this sight which is here: men of different degrees,

men of different ages ; some of us in the very beginning and pride and power of manhood, and some of us very near the grave. Yet all one, with one God and Father of us all ; all kneeling and looking up to the same Heaven, in which, for Christ's sake, we hope to meet.

That brings me to the last thought : " What shall I get by being a Christian ? " I tell you, my brothers, those who do not know it—and they are few, or they would not be here—I will tell you another thing you will get by being a Christian. You will get rid of the fear of death. Now, there are not many men who would not give much that they had to be able to banish the fear of death. Well, your love of Jesus will expel the fear of death, because perfect love casteth out fear, and you will look forward to His appearing Who has died for you, and Who has prepared a place for you. Only go on in the simple work of duty, and there is no fear.

I see a simple funeral passing through the street. A very plain coffin ; a worn, shabby pall. There is only the undertaker, only two or three mourners—one may be an aged widow, and there may be a grandchild or two with her. And I hear one man say to another, " Who is it ? " And the answer is, " It's only a working man." But what, my brothers, if that working man happens to be a gentleman and a nobleman in the Peerage of God ? There is no title in any Court guide that is so beautiful, as I have said before, as that of a working man. And when his labour's o'er,

there is nothing but bright hope for him in the world to come. Don't think I want to flatter you. I love you too well for that. For many years I have been in the midst of working men, and they have trusted me, and I have trusted them ; and they know me, and I know them. We are exactly alike. We have all our faults, and some of us have our abilities, and use them aright ; but of this I am quite sure, that in God's sight, work accepted as coming from Him is holy, and will be repaid a thousandfold at the last. Put your trust in the Lord, and fear Him. Never mind the scepticism that is going about. Don't believe what other people tell you. Don't care to talk to them. Make your religion a thing between you and God. You will learn more on your knees by yourself, in your bedroom, than from all the orators and writers that may come before you. Go to God.

"For the sound of the anvil seems to say,
It's good to work as well as to pray ;
And work that comes with prayer at its side,
Was never in earth or Heaven denied."

And, be sure, that the life of work and the life of duty shall have a happy death.

"Where the dews glisten and the song-birds warble,
His dust to dust is laid ;
In Nature's keeping, with no pomp of marble,
To shame his modest shade.

From The
Rev. C. R. Gunne, M.A.
P. O. Box 175,
CLINTON, ONT.

The forges glow, the anvils all are ringing,
 Beneath its smoky veil
The city, where he dwelt, is ever swinging
 Its ponderous iron flail.

But by his grave is peace and perfect beauty,
 With the sweet Heaven above;
Fit emblems of a life of Work and Duty,
 Transfigured into Love."

SERMON VI.

“Be ye Good Bankers.” *

BY THE REV.

H. C. SHUTTLEWORTH, M.A.,

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King's College, London.*

S. LUKE XIX. 12, 13.

“A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called ten servants of his, and gave them ten pounds, and said unto them, Trade ye herewith till I come.”



HERE is a question which is borne in upon every thoughtful man with great force at certain times in his life. It is the simple, irresistible question why he is here in this world at all; whether he has come as the product of force and matter, the sport of some invincible destiny which plays with him, or whether, as Christians have in all ages believed, he has been sent here with a work to do, a life to live, an inner character to build up, and fellow-men and women to help and cheer. There are times when that question comes home to one with terrible force—when it becomes almost overwhelming. You

* Γίνεσθε τραπεζίται δόκιμοι; a well-known traditional saying of Christ, which may very probably be genuine.

stand in a graveyard, and it is thick with graves, and you think that these lying here—men, women, and children—were once alive in this world. They had each a history of their own. Their life story is written somewhere, if one could read it. What was it like? Each was different from the other. Each had its own care, its own joys, its own sorrows, its own temptations, and its own sins. Each life was as individual and separate as my own. Then we wonder what has become of it, and where it has gone. Or perhaps you stand—as I stand at this moment—and look into the faces of many men; and I think to myself that as there are no two faces exactly alike among these rows upon rows of men before me, so there are no two lives exactly alike. Each has got its own story. Each has got its own secrets. Each has got its own loves and hates. Each has got its own inner life, slowly and silently building up during the years of its earthly pilgrimage. And I am going to put it to you, my friends, that that life, with all that it means to you, has not come by mere chance, and is not the product of force and matter and destiny. You are here because God has sent you here, as truly as their lord sent for those ten servants and gave them the means with which to trade.

It seems that Christ spoke this parable in rather different forms, twice over. It is very like another parable—that of the talents; but whether the two must be regarded as entirely distinct, or whether the same parable was put in a somewhat altered form, does not

make any difference. The point is that our Lord is regarding human life as being rather like a business. When Christ gave the parables of the tares and the sower, He went to nature, or agriculture, for His text. Here He goes to business life, and He tells us that life is in one sense like a business, and different gifts, different possessions, are like the capital of a trader. He has had them put into his hands, and he has got to use them. We have gifts put into our hands. No man comes into this world, as it were, with a clean slate. That is one of the mysteries of life—those who have children will know from experience that we have transmitted to our children certain qualities of our own. How that may be, science has not yet told us. We only know that to some extent men do hand on to their children their own qualities. We all come into this world with certain tendencies, with certain faculties, not developed, but in a dormant state, like the seeds in winter. They are there within us, and as we grow older, the circumstances of life bring those tendencies out and realize them in one way or another. That is part of the raw material of life, of character. So are the circumstances and conditions in which men are placed. One man gets a good chance, like the man with ten talents. One man has a good education and every advantage for a fair start in life. He has a fair amount of capital, in the imagery of the parable, to start with. Another man does not get a good chance. Circumstances are always against him; perhaps he was badly brought up in a poor way; he never had a chance of a good

education ; and the tendencies of those who went before him were for the most part of a base and evil kind. But the point is this—whether it is much or little, we are bidden to trade with it, to make the best of what God has given us. For our life is like a business, and these qualities are like the capital with which we have to trade.

Now then, if we have got so far as that, we must recall the fact that there was one of these servants who thought his chance was a poor one—that he had not the opportunity of doing much with one paltry pound. So what does he do? He doesn't take the trouble to trade with it. He buries it, hides it away, and then with a great display of honesty when his lord comes back, he gives it to him. "There it is, just as you gave it to me. Here thou hast that is thine." And the lord turned upon him and said he was a wicked and slothful servant, and should be punished because of his laziness and neglect. If a man says, "I never had a chance in life ; other men had something by inheritance of this or that, but I never had anything to call a chance"—that is the man who only has one talent—one pound given him by God. But have you any business to bury it or hide it away? No. Because you have got little, that is all the more reason why you should make the most of it. Those who find themselves in life with hampered chances and stunted capacities have to go and make the best of them. There are some gifts we have all got. Every man, woman, and child has some powers which can be exercised for good or evil, as we please. It is well to think of this,

because to-day is the first Sunday in the season called Lent. This has been kept from time immemorial in the Christian Church as a time when men think of the severer side of their religion. Nowadays we don't like the severe side of our religion. Formerly, the Puritan inheritance which our forefathers received stamped a stern tone on our religion, and very likely some of us were brought up in a hard form of belief, and then have gone in later life to the other extreme. There is always that danger. And in shaking off some of that Puritan inheritance, we are apt to shake off some of the truth in it. It made stern men, but it made true men. If men in that time were rather narrow in their outlook, and abhorred things which we permit, they were servants of God and true men at heart. It made strong men, if it did not make broad-minded men. In the reaction from Puritanism, some of us are apt to go too far—as reactions generally do—and to suppose that as we have shaken off some of its gloom, there is nothing stern about religion at all. There never was a greater mistake. On every page of the New Testament we are told that evil must make out its own punishment. Evil must be punished ; and if men do evil they must be punished.

This season of Lent, then, bringing before us the sterner aspects of life, tells us that it is good for men now and then to do what a man of business should do, and, as it were, take stock. If a man did not do that, I do not think his business would be of much account. In the same way, if our life is like a business, we have to stop and ask how

things are going with us—whether the talent God gave us is being judiciously laid out, or whether we are burying it, like the unprofitable servant, and doing just nothing with it.

(1.) I invite you to think of that for a few minutes. Let us take stock of some of the gifts which God has given to us all. It is a very common thing for men to say, "I have no gifts, no talents, no chance." It is not true. We have all got some, and one I am going to speak of now. Everyone of us has got the gift of Will. I said just now that we were not brought into the world with a clean slate. Inheritance is one thing; your circumstances, or what people call the environment of our lives, is another thing; and there is a third thing in yourselves—that is your will, and your will acts upon the two other things. Your inheritance from your forefathers, the circumstances that have influenced your lives; your will acts upon these to build up human character. That is what we are here for, each of us in himself to build up a noble and manly character. Remember, that is the only thing you have which you can take away with you when you die. You may make money. You must leave that behind. You may make a great name. You must leave that behind. You may make friends. You must leave them behind. The only thing you can take with you is yourself; and you have been building that self up as the days went by and you are building it now. The raw material, like the rough block of stone thrown down at the sculptor's door, out of which he can carve an angel or a devil if he pleases—the raw material

of your character, the inheritance, and the circumstances about you, must be acted upon by your will ; and it is your will that can shape them into an angel or a fiend. For there is in every man, as has been boldly and truly said, a possible beast and a possible Christ ; and your duty and mine in life is, as Tennyson sang, to "move upward, working out the beast, and let the ape and the tiger die." And to do that you must build up Christ in you, Christ in you the hope of glory. You can only do that by constantly using your will to choose the right and avoid the evil. Every day your life is full of little choices—small choices which often act automatically and unconsciously. It is not the great choices of life which decide. It is the small ones. The immediate issue is small ; but it has given a bias and a twist to your will, and the next time the choice comes you will choose as before—choose the low and avoid the high. They are really the exercises of your will, and you are strengthening it or weakening it by choosing the high or the low, as it may be ; and I would say, ask yourself, each man by himself, "What have I done, and what am I doing, with this strange and mysterious talent which the Lord has put into my hands—my will ? Within certain limits I have the power to choose. How have I chosen ? How am I choosing ? The life of the beast, or the life of the perfect man ? Which am I tending towards ? Which am I becoming ?" When a man asks himself questions like these he turns naturally to the habits he has formed. Habit really makes up character. A man is very largely what his

habits make him ; and it is very easy when one is young to make good habits, and very hard when one is old to break bad ones. When one is young, the character is plastic, like a bit of wax, and you can mould it into shape ; but when a man is old it is fixed like a piece of stone, and to carve and cut it into a shape different from what it has taken is very difficult and sometimes impossible.

Oh, beware, you young men, of the habits you are forming. Use your will to form the good ones and reject the bad ones, because in years to come you will find it infinitely hard to break your bad habits. I quoted Tennyson just now, and there is another passage which comes to my mind. He is telling a story of a knight who went on a quest of honour against three enemies. He overthrew two of them, and when he engaged a third he found he was an elderly man, but more tough and wiry and hard than the two younger men he had encountered and overthrown. Then he discovered that under his armour his enemy wore a tight-fitting suit of hardened skins of beasts that turned the edge of his sword when he had hacked the armour off.

"He seemed as one

Who all in later, sadder age begins

To war against ill uses of a life.

But these from all his life arise, and cry—

'Thou hast made us lords, and canst not put us down!'

He half despairs."*

The knight could only conquer his enemy by one brave stroke. He seizes him in his arms, and throws him

* "Idylls of the King": Gareth and Lynette.

over the bridge. So the man who has grown old in bad habits can only rescue himself from their tyranny and thralldom by one brave stroke. Does not that enforce the question that I am putting to you—"God has entrusted in my keeping the talent of will. How am I using it?"

(2.) There is another power closely connected with this one, which we may regard as also a talent or pound put into our hands to trade with. That is the power of Self-mastery. We know there are influences, tendencies, passions, and temptations in us which we are called upon to control. When we were baptized we promised among other things to renounce all the sinful lusts of the flesh. Lust only means a liking—a thing the flesh likes; and although it has come to be used in a bad sense, there is no real reason why it should be. A liking in the flesh is perfectly proper. We do not please God the more by making ourselves uncomfortable, or doing unpleasant things, unless at the call of duty. But the truth is this—that there are tendencies in the flesh which like to go beyond the limits of God's law; and when that is the case, you have to learn to say "No" to yourself. Perhaps it is a difficult thing to say "No" to anybody, but it is more difficult to say "No" to one's self than to anybody else. Far more. And therefore when we face the fact that God has given us the power of ruling these bodies of ours as though we were kings and our various powers our subjects, we sigh to think how men let their bodies rule them, and drift and carry them where their desire pleases. It is a

pity to see men the sport of their own feelings and desires, unable to say, "No ; you shall not have that." And that is why when this season of Lent comes we begin to think of fasting. There is a great deal of nonsense talked about fasting. But there is a great need, a great truth, behind it. It is this. You know that where there is a dangerous precipice a fence is put round it, but the fence is not put just at the edge. It is put at a safe distance from the edge. There are plenty of actions that may be perfectly harmless up to a certain point, but he is a wise man who says, "I know it is dangerous to go beyond that mark." It may be a question of drink, or of food, or of laziness, and he says, "I have fenced the precipice at a safe distance, and I won't run the risk of going any nearer to the danger." That is a wise man who has the power of self-control.

Take the case of temper. I suppose everybody has got a temper except a fool. You are not responsible for having a temper any more than you are for the colour of your hair. That is probably a matter of inheritance. But you are responsible for keeping it in order. Nothing causes more misery in a home than a sulky or a fierce and angry temper. Think of it in your own homes. If there is one there who is always irritable, always grumbling, ready on the least provocation to fly out in furious passion or relapse into sullen silence, you know how disagreeable it makes life for the rest. It was once said that a bad-tempered man was like a hedgehog rolled up the wrong way, tormenting himself with his own bristles. But the worst of it is that the man

has bristles on both sides. Now ask yourselves, whether you have used, whether you do use, your power of will in order to master your temper. It is a matter which involves the exercise of one's will very persistently and constantly. For instance, if while I have been speaking your conscience has compelled the admission, "I am afraid my temper has been a sore trial to some I have had to do with"—make up your minds here and now that the next time you feel inclined to fly into a temper you will say "No." It will mean a fight. It will mean a severe struggle. If you let your temper have the sway for some time, you will find it hard to put down. But God will help you. God always helps the man who really tries to help himself. See if you can't use the power God has given you in order to conquer your temper. You will find as life goes on that instead of being a misery to yourself and an irritation to everybody else, your temper, ruled and disciplined by your will, becomes a strength to you; it becomes a fine quality of your character. The quality of restrained anger is one of the greatest powers in life.

(3.) You have all got the talent of influence over other men. That is a mysterious thing, very difficult to analyse; but it is one of the most obvious facts of life that we do influence one another, for good or for evil, on every step of life's journey. It is a talent with which we have to do business. What we are, rather than what we say, exercises this influence over others, and either uplifts them or helps them to go down. It is very difficult for a man to keep his

real self long hidden from his fellows. We fancy we have been keeping things all to ourselves, and perhaps after all we are the last person to find out what everybody has known all along. Because what a man really is comes out of him in spite of himself, in word, or manner, or gesture. A lift of the eyebrow, a movement of the lip, and those who can read faces have read his secret. Whether you know it or not, whether you are trying to do so or not, you are influencing other people for good or bad by what you really are in yourselves—that inner character which you are building up every hour of your lives.

We have been asking questions. Let us ask another. "Can I think of anybody whom I have really helped, in the whole course of my life, to be more unselfish, more courageous, more kind, and more self-controlled?" I don't mean by talking to them. That is very easy. But an ounce of personal example is worth a world of mere precept or advice. I ask you to question your own conscience whether your life is helping other people or not. There are many people whose lives are like an inspiration when you come across them; people who are like sunbeams in the house or in company—so bright, so cheerful, so good. They seem to radiate goodness from themselves. You can't go into their presence without feeling uplifted into a better manhood. Is your life and mine like that? or is it not rather too true, not that my unselfishness has helped others to be unselfish, that my courage has taught them how to be brave, that my self-denial and sacrifice has led them to deny self also for the

sake of others—but that my selfishness has helped them to be selfish, my cowardice has helped them to be cowards, and my indifference to right and truth has made them more careless or more base. When we come to look back on the life we have lived, one of our saddest memories will be that of men and women whom we have hindered in the use of their talents.

Do you remember Hood's "Lady's Dream"? The poet makes the self-indulgent woman, in her sleep, see moving before her the long procession of those she had failed to help :

"The wounds I might have healed,
The human sorrow and smart,
And yet it never was in my soul
To play so ill a part;
For evil is wrought by want of thought,
As well as by want of heart."

And so some day perhaps, in sad and solemn procession, there will pass before the eyes of our mind and spirit the spectral images of our fellows whom we did not help, or whom we have positively hindered in the use of the gifts God gave them. Shall it be so? There is time before us yet if we choose to use it.

There is one last word. "Trade ye herewith—*till I come*," says the Master. That strikes the solemn note of Responsibility. How He will come, and in exactly what manner He will ask for an account of the gifts He has given to us, we don't know. All we know is that in some way we shall have to give an account to Him, our Master, of what we

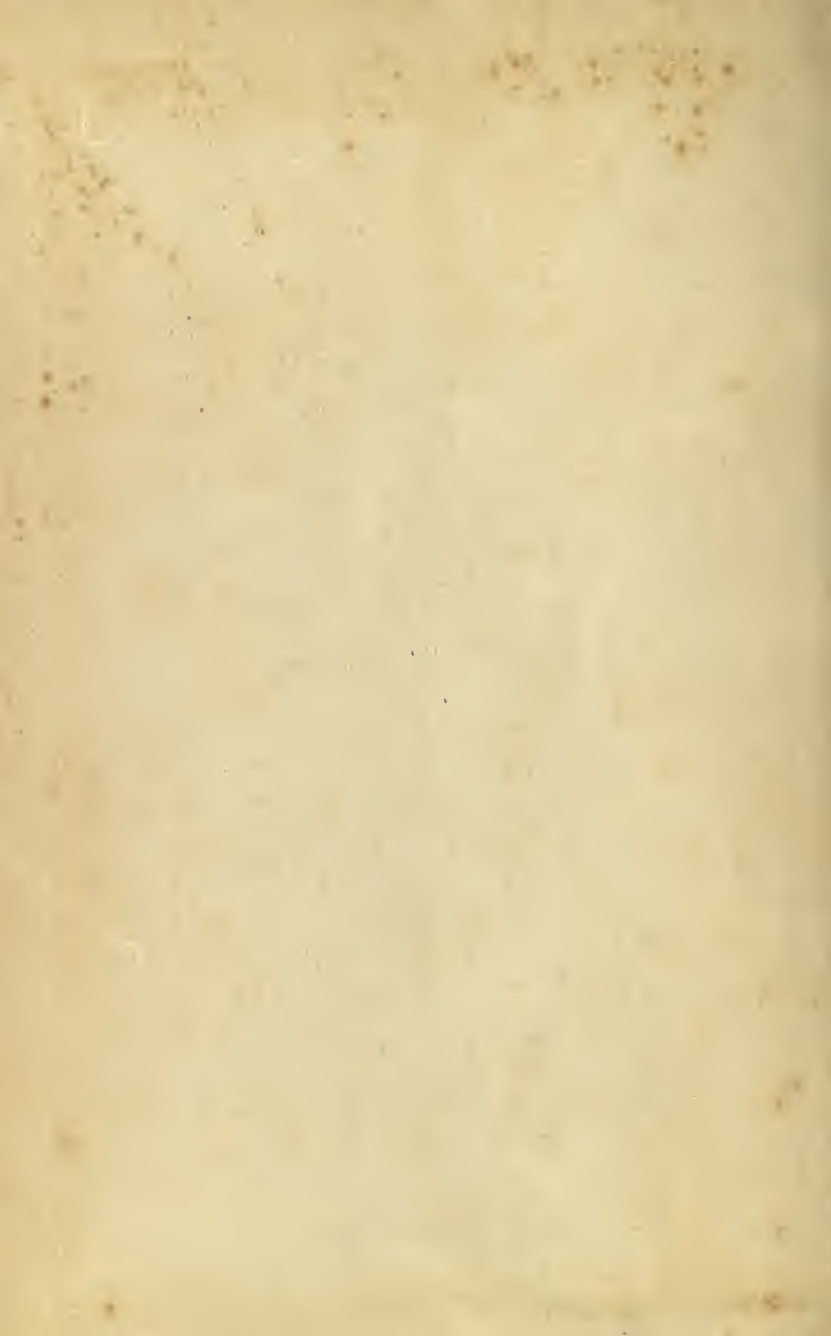
have done with the gifts, great or small, He has placed in our charge—"till I come." Into your life, at some period, soon or late, He will come, and will ask you, as He asked of His servants in the parable, what you have done with the gifts entrusted with you ; how you have used the talent, or pound, placed in your keeping ; and you will have to answer Him.

I remember hearing a story when I was at Oxford, of an old Fellow of a certain famous College, who had been for an extraordinary number of years—he was very old—in possession of a particular office which had been endowed long centuries before by a great and good Englishman. This old Fellow looked upon himself as personally responsible, in some sense, to the Founder ; and he used sometimes to say that he was fulfilling a trust and he hoped the Founder would think he was discharging it to the best of his ability. When he lay upon his death-bed, I am told that though his powers were failing and consciousness had gone, the one thing he said, and that over and over again, was this, "When I meet the Founder, what will he say to me ? What will he say to me ?"

My friends, when you and I meet the Master, what will He say to us, of those gifts of which we have been speaking, and many another besides ? What will He say to us ?

(The above Sermon was preached extempore, and is printed from a newspaper report. The preacher much regrets that he has not found leisure to rewrite it, or to revise it as thoroughly as he would have wished to do.)





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